WOOING THE WIDOW.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MISS BREMER'S VISIT TO COOPER'S LANDING," "GETTING INTO SOCIETY," "PLEASING THE PARISH," ETC. ETC.

"When I said that I would live a bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were married."—BENEDICK.
Much Ado About Nothing.

EARLY marriages, every one protests, are very bad things. That is, middle-aged people will tell you so, with a grave shake of the head, and they make about as much impression upon their auditors as the like counsel did upon them when they wished to "see the folly of it, too." But, after all, how few people, who have had the patience or good fortune to wait until the judgment is matured, and impulse is in a measure subdued, make marriage anything more than a matter of simple worldly utility, or invest it with any of the romantic hues that fade soon enough into the sombre light of everyday domestic life!

So thought Colonel Hayward, or rather so mused he over a very fine cigar, as he sat with his feet elevated to the window-sill of a front room in the St. Charles, on his way home, after the fatigues and dangers of camp life were ended by the last treaty with Mexico. He had had his share of hallucination, as what cadet with bright buttons has not? There was a time—he could remember it distinctly—when a miniature-case received more of his devotion than the Bible his good mother had put into his hands at parting. He played the flute then to the annoyance of his immediate neighbors, and the disgust of the echoes in and around West Point—echoes supposed to have heard some very good music in their day. He had delicious reveries by moonlight of a home that was to be Paradise itself—in a small way—with a garden that grew prize strawberries, and a wife to choose them for his peculiar gratification. Adelaide was to be the wife's name; he scribbled it over his equations, and ornamented the margin of all his drawings with the mystic letters done in German text. But the fair Adelaide had come to the sensible conclusion that a lieutenant's pay could not furnish and maintain the above-mentioned cottage; perhaps it was with the advice of a mother, who had seen the folly of early marriages herself. So the dream of eternal fidelity that was to outlast evil and good report, or even a seven years' captivity, was rudely broken; for the lady of his dreams had accepted the home and grounds of a wealthy widower, "in the cotton trade and sugar line." What was military glory to winters in town, and a suite of rooms at the Astor!

Then later, when the young lieutenant had shone as the best dancer and rider—out of the dragoons—then at —— Barracks, he had indulged in certain fancies he scarcely cared to recall now. There was the daughter of the commanding officer—he confided the story of his cruel disappointment to her attentive ears—holding her fair white hand the while, and looking up into her tearful eyes. He revived the flute practice for a serenade; but he was most mysteriously ordered away the very next week, though General ——, her father, bade him a most cordial and regretful adieu, and wished him all distinction in the future. He never could quite understand it; for Tompkins, of the 4th, was retained, and that stupid Jones with the heavy moustache. They paid much more attention to the lady than he had done, and were despised by all their brother officers; although Tompkins was a son of Governor Tompkins, of Tompkinsville, and Jones had three thousand a year, besides his pay, left by his maternal grandmother. Hayward never heard from her until he received a delicate envelop, with the bridal cards of Mr. and Mrs. Tompkins.

There was the dashing Miss Smith, who had been a belle at Washington three winters; she won his heart—shall we say?—by a *coup de main*. She taught him the polka when it first came out, and clapped her hands so prettily at his slight mistakes, and called him "such a dear awkward fellow!" And with what a charming *naïveté* she addressed him as "Charlie," the second time of their meeting, and then begged his pardon so gracefully; for "she had had a cousin Charlie, who was a great favorite of hers, and she heard his brother officers call him 'Charlie' so much. He was such a favorite with them—did he know it?"

All this was very soothing, to say the least, until he heard the same remarks made to young Carson, who blushed up to his curls with delighted self-love.

These were some of the colonel's experiences. For a while, he took to men entirely—after his mother's death, and his sister's marriage. He talked knowingly over his wine of feminine vanity and deceit; that women had no hearts deeper than the end of a purse, and no souls above a Paris bonnet. Lieutenant Hayward was getting to be thirty, and had found several gray hairs in his dark locks. Fortunately, while thus endeavoring to convert himself into an established woman-hater, the affairs of our government with Mexico needed the slight interference of the army to bring things to rights again. Pity was quite wasted when given to those gallant men who went so willingly to the exposure of a wretched climate and a revengeful enemy. They

felt their lives rusting out in the tedium of keeping an inland post from falling to decay, and frontier skirmishes were just enough to provoke one's appetite for military distinction. It was a good thing for the army, whatever it may have been in general, and none was braver than the discarded lover of Adelaide. Holding an important command, and having had the good fortune of turning the tide of one of the most decisive battles, he received the most rapid promotion ever known in our army. The war was ended now, and he found himself colonel, and the whole newspaper press of the country ringing with his praise. His arrival at the St. Charles, five days before, had been telegraphed northward under the head of "movements of distinguished individuals;" and it was seeing this in a Baltimore paper, which he still held between his fingers, that had induced these serious reflections. He had bidden farewell to his best friends, who were hurrying to their families on leave. One told him of his wife he had not seen in two years, and whose letters he always wore about him. Another was so anxious to see his son and namesake, who was old enough to send messages to "papa," in a great scrawling hand, at the foot of "mamma's" letters. Somehow, he always envied these men when the post came in. It was nothing to him: a business letter or so; perhaps a dozen lines from some gentleman friend, talking of the races or the last theatrical star. *These* men always appeared so provokingly happy! And now, because he had no wife or family awaiting him, he was detained on a tiresome court martial, in the very height of a New Orleans summer.

Just to-night the colonel wished he was married. He should not like to go about it himself; he would rather face a battery than lay siege to a lady's good will. But he thought how nice it would be if, without his aid or connivance, he could wake some fine day and find himself settled into the calm of matrimony, with a child on each knee, and a charming wife devoted to his comfort. He thought of Adam, and envied the brevity of our great progenitor's wooing. But where to find an Eve? He had entirely kept aloof from ladies' society for the past five years. His whole female acquaintance only included his sister, his friend Logan's mother—a charming old lady, always advising him to marry—and his laundress. He could not conveniently marry either of the three; he was principled against general society.

The colonel threw away the stump of his cigar, and put his hand to his head with a natural meditative gesture. He didn't like the bald place that met his touch; it reminded him that his thirty-sixth birthday was not far off.

It was the suddenness of the colonel's manœuvres that had so disconcerted the enemy at Palo Alto; in little more time than it would take him to give the word of command, he had dashed off a letter to his friend, Major Porter, the happy father of the precocious juvenile, wherein he had intrusted a most important commission—nothing less than to choose him a wife.

"I am heartily tired of this," said the applicant for matrimonial honors; "there 's no one to talk to me when I 'm melancholy, or count my things for me when they come from the wash. I want somebody to read to me, to keep house so that I can entertain my friends; in fact, to be a kind of general and invariable quartermaster. Never off duty, and always on guard. She must be sensible, economical, straightforward. I think I should prefer a widow. She would have no ridiculous sentimental notions, which I have outlived, and would thoroughly understand housekeeping. If she has two or three children, so much the better. They make a home cheerful, I 've heard you say. Ask your wife about it.

"P. S. I should prefer girls; boys take too much managing."

When the colonel had once formed a plan, it was prosecuted with his characteristic vigor. He made a thousand admirable plans, as he battled with the heat and mosquitoes, that seemed determined to reduce what Mexico and the enemy's sharp fire had spared. These plans were a great assistance during the three long weeks that intervened before the well-known termination of Major ——'s trial, which interested even the community at large, though the charges did prove too frivolous to mention. At last, just before the court martial was broken up, giving the colonel liberty to report himself at Washington, came the looked-for letter from Major Porter. It must be confessed, the colonel opened it with slight trepidation.

"Sensible fellow," wrote the major. "I always told Eliza you had excellent common sense packed away, if you could only stop to get at it. Know just the lady to suit you. Intimate friend of Eliza's, schoolmates and all that. Amiable, a little money—enough to pay her milliner's bills, as she 's tolerably economical—steps out well, good teeth, and has one child. The sooner you apply the better. Several are quite ready to take the command, Eliza says.

"P. S. My boy is a match for anything. Want to show him up, as you can't snub children any longer."

The colonel gave orders for immediate departure. Truth was, he feared that his valor, like that of the celebrated Bob Acres, might ooze out at his fingers' ends. He intended to "take time by the *fire*-lock;" and, as he sped northward with all the speed of railroads and steamboats, his reveries very naturally turned on the important step he was about to take.

"If Porter had been a little more explicit!" quoth the colonel, in confidence, to his cigar and the flagstaff of the deck he was treading. "Not a word about eyes or hair; and he knows, if I have a single weakness towards the sex, it takes the shape of fine

eyes. But, now I think of it, I can't say I spoke of personal beauty. Can't say I did. Left it out of the question altogether, with the romance. Stout, good-natured woman, I suppose, about my own age, say; dark stuff frocks, black silk apron, cap and streamers." The colonel was unconsciously drawing on his recollections of Mrs. Logan, senior, and, save the age, the portrait was tolerably correct. "Motherly sort of a somebody; understands gruel and rheumatism, and all that sort of thing. Girl, I suppose; tall girl in pantalettes and curl papers; calls me papa, and wheedles me for mint-stick. By and by, just as her mother and I begin to get along comfortably, brings a lot of jackanapes into my quarters, who drink my wine and smoke my cigars, and talk nonsense to Mrs. Hayward. 'Mrs. Hayward?' Good! that 's what I never thought of! She must have my name, of course."

Truth was that, by the aid of such inward cogitations, the colonel, like many another raw recruit, began to wish he had not enlisted. He registered his name on the books of the United States Hotel, Philadelphia, with a half hope that he should find no letter awaiting him; but he was fairly committed, as he saw by a dispatch from his friend Porter, dated Fort ——, where he was now stationed, and saying that he had arranged for him to meet the lady referred to at his very pleasant quarters, where he soon hoped to introduce him to "Eliza," and that remarkable child whose sayings and doings had filled so many sheets of paper in times past.

It was a cool morning for August, and Chestnut Street remarkably quiet, the colonel's cigar unusually fine, and the hotel piazza shady. He occupied a large arm-chair, with his feet in the elevated position he was so fond of, and watched the few customers that came at this early hour to shop at Levy's. Perhaps more than one glance was bestowed on his soldierlike figure, the close military cap drawn so as to shade his eyes, marking him as in the army, and, of course, one of those heroes at present the theme of public praise. The regulation, mowing the faces of our officers as clean as an English lawn, with a small bit of side shrubbery, had not yet gone into effect; and the colonel's personal pride—our hero was but human—centered in a ferocious, but decidedly military mustache, having an abrupt upward curl, the result of long twisting, usually the left hand accompaniment to his cigar.

Presently, his attention was arrested by a very graceful figure poised on the low step of the entrance to Levy's, while a very fine pair of eyes looked up and down the street as if for an omnibus. There were none in sight; though, as usual, when one appeared, a continuous line followed. The lady did not notice her opposite neighbor, but seemed annoyed at the detention. The colonel thought he should like a nearer view. That little foot looked remarkably well in the distance. Presently, he threw away his cigar, not half consumed; the lady had signaled a Chestnut Street stage, and he saw Fairmount upon it in large white letters. It was several years since he had been at Fairmount. There was the whole morning on his hands—what could he do better? Ah, colonel, the *ruse* was worthy a practiced man of the world! It was far too well conceived for a modest soldier. He must have moved quickly as usual, for he reached the centre of the street just as the lady did. Of course, she drew back, hesitated, and finally stepped in, while the colonel bowed politely, held open the door, and stepped in after her; but not until he had noticed he was quite right about the foot, and that the hand, in its dark glove, was equally slender.

As I said, it was early in the morning, and the Chestnut Street line being principally employed to carry up-town merchants to business, was nearly deserted on its return trip. There was a nurse maid with two children going to Fairmount for the fresh air, the fair unknown, and the gallant colonel. He could not look at the sunny side of the street forever; besides, it twisted his neck to a most uncomfortable position, and, when he turned, it was equally impossible to avoid looking his neighbor directly in the face. He tried not to, however. He examined the skirt of her dress until he had counted the tucks six times over: he could have sworn to the pattern of that neat blue cambric years after. He even examined the seal and key of her watch-chain curiously; but, after all, his eyes reached her face, deliberately as they had traveled. It so chanced that their eyes met. It was very provoking, certainly. No wonder that the lady's color rose as she drew down her veil with a quick jerk; but it was one of those short veils so fashionable a little time since, scarcely more than a flounce of black lace, which only heightened the delicacy of her complexion, and left the chin and throat half revealed. The lady wound her purse tightly around her fingers, and began talking to the child next her in the most interested manner possible. It was a bright little creature, and smiled and caroled good-naturedly in return to her advances. The colonel began to notice it, too, and thought if all children were like it, the race would be tolerable. Then came a vision of the tall girl in pantalettes, who seemed to rise between him and his fair *vis-à-vis* menacingly. He turned away in disgust, and with a stronger disinclination than ever to taking his passage next morning for Fort ——.

As the omnibus turned down Schuylkill Seventh Street, the lady made a faint attempt at the check-string, and the colonel had the extreme pleasure of arresting the stage, passing up the silver coin her hands had pressed, and holding open the door for her descent. He dared not offer his hand to assist her; but, as he had the last glimpse of her figure ascending the tall marble steps of the corner house, he contented himself with talking to the child she had honored with her notice. The colonel had not

looked at a baby before, unless by particular request, in the last seven years; yet now the delighted nurse maid thought "the gentleman must be very fond of children!"

Alas for the widow's prospects! and the misfortune of having one's time on his hands on a bright summer morning in a strange city!

The colonel thought Fairmount had improved very much since he had visited it before. Whether it was the sunshine or not, everything had a pleasant glow. The marble Cupid, sending up a *jet d'eau* from his distended cheeks, seemed more smiling than ever. He looked at the Diana, and thought of the foot that had first arrested his attention; the musical murmur of the fountain recalled her voice, as she thanked him for his courtesy—the colonel, used to the rough tones of command, thought every woman's voice Æolian. At any rate, he passed a very delightful morning, and he *did not* think of the widow. He looked earnestly at the corner house when the omnibus passed again, but the shutters were jealously closed: no wonder, as it was mid-day. He looked closely at every blue dress he saw all the way down Chestnut Street; nay, he even strolled its full length, past the high marble steps again, that evening; but there was not even a glimpse afforded him of the fair incognito.

As he gave orders for an early departure, he thought uncomfortably of the morrow's engagement.

It was long before broad day when he rose from an unquiet sleep, wherein he had dreamed that he was walking at Fairmount with his acquaintance of the morning, enjoying a most delightful conversation, when the widow, still in cap and streamers, had suddenly appeared thrusting her over the dam in the most revengeful manner, and that he saw her drawn up under the huge revolving wheels, her long fair hair floating upon the tide, and her hands stretched out imploringly towards him! No wonder the colonel awoke with a start; but he saw nothing but the porter dashing Fairmount water upon the steps of the opposite Custom House, and a solitary milkman creeping along half asleep, in spite of his early drive. It was quite a relief when the jingling of bells, and the quick tread of waiters through the passage, announced the day fairly commenced.

The boat was not very regular in its trips, as it plied between the small towns on the river and Philadelphia, principally for the benefit of the market people. It was filled with this class of passengers and their wares, brooms, pails, and grocery sundries, in exchange for the potatoes and early peaches they had carried to town. The little cabin —he glanced in as he passed—had its complement of their wives and daughters, short, stout women with large baskets and bundles, and several children in chintz sun-bonnets. The colonel's valise gave him very little to look after. He had read the morning papers at the breakfast-table, and he did not see a single person that he felt inclined to talk to. Just as the last bell rang, his interest was quickened by a party he saw moving through the barrels and boxes of the wharf—a gentlemanly, middle-aged man, a young boy, and a lady somewhat resembling the subject of his dreams. No, he could not be mistaken; the dark mousseline dress and cape, and the thick blue veil, could not disguise that face and figure. The colonel leaned forward, forgetful of place and etiquette; they were late, the gang-plank was withdrawn. The boat moved slowly from the wharf. He stretched out his hand just in time to assist her to spring upon the deck; the carpet-bag was thrown after her by the porter; the old gentleman and the boy waved their adieus. They were not going, then? for the boat moved out more rapidly, and there stood the gallant colonel by the side of his incognito, actually blushing from his late courtesy, and in a whirl of emotions he could not define, from this unexpected and most delightful meeting.

The lady, who, in her haste, had evidently taken him for the commander of the boat, was the first to recover composure. She thanked him very politely, without raising her eyes to his face, and disappeared within the cabin. The colonel's spirits sank again. If there had been any gentlemen with her, there were a thousand pretexts for addressing them, and at least learning her name. Or she would have walked on deck with them: he wondered how she could breathe in that horrid cabin, with those stupid people! The colonel managed to get into a heat between these cogitations, and a quick walk in the neighborhood of the machinery.

But he was hastening to the widow as fast as the revolutions of the wheels could carry him. The green banks of the unromantic island, upon which the fort was situated, began to emerge from the broad waters of the Delaware. He caught a glimpse of the stars and stripes fluttering in the light wind, and, as the long swells dashed in among the marsh grasses in anticipation of their landing, he distinguished his friend Porter waiting upon the miniature wharf to welcome him. The colonel forgot his errand, and, for an instant, his fair fellow-traveler, in the pleasure of the hearty welcome he received from his old companion in arms.

"And this is my Willy!" said the major, pointing to a shy juvenile in his "first pair," who stood eyeing the new arrival as if it had been an importation from a menagerie. "But is it possible Agnes has not come? Didn't you see her on board?"

As the colonel was entirely at sea with regard to the *personnel*, or even the *locale* of the said young person, his answer was not very satisfactory; but a lady, emerging from the cabin, and kissing her hand gayly to the major, gave conclusive affirmatory evidence. It was no other than the fair incognito, answering to the title no longer, however, but introduced to our friend under her real name, Miss

Agnes Lawrence! And she, too, was a guest of the major, who, in his blunt, good-natured way, insisted upon "Hayward's offering his arm to her," while he looked after the carpet-bags and bundles.

The colonel was afraid he was dreaming again opposite the Custom House; the reality of knowing Miss Lawrence, nay, of feeling that light hand resting on his arm, seemed too great a happiness for waking bliss. The pressure, slight as it was, gave him a heart-thrill he had not experienced since the days of Adelaide and the flute practice.

I do not believe either spoke from the time they left the wharf until the sally-port appeared before them, a graceful, but massive archway, and the dark guns peered curiously over the white wall down upon them. But the major made amends, keeping up a continual fire of interrogatories, half of which he answered himself, forgetful that the rest had ever been expressed. Willy was industriously assisting the orderly, who followed in the rear with their baggage. Once the wind blew a corner of the blue veil directly across the colonel's face, but the major had caught a view of his household, and did not notice it.

He did well in describing his quarters as pleasant. The neat yellow walls of the barracks, the green piazzas of the officers' quarters, the major's own house, which he occupied by right of commanding officer, were as neat, and, withal, as picturesque an arrangement as one could desire. The men in their blue jackets were lounging in and out of the building assigned to them, dinner being just over, and the shrill sound of a fife drowned the hum of the insects, as the small, but ambitious musician pursued the practice of a new quickstep.

"Eliza"—for that was all the introduction the major vouchsafed—came forth to meet her guests. She was a sensible, rather stylish-looking woman, with a merry glance in her black eyes, and a half-formed smile "chasing the dimples on her cheek." She wore a neat-fitting white muslin, and the most captivating black silk apron. The colonel was not in the least afraid of her, and watched the affectionate meeting with Miss Lawrence in a mood he could not attempt to define. The camp-wearied soldier began to find the meaning of the word home, particularly when seated in the shaded parlor so neatly furnished, and so suggestive of a woman's tasteful presence. There was the sewing-chair by the work-table, with a little apron half hemmed, surmounted by a golden thimble, just as she had thrown it down to meet them. A wineglass held one delicate white rose, with its buds and foliage; a larger bouquet ornamented the open piano. Eliza was one of those rare wives who "find time to practice." The colonel threw himself down on the chintz-covered sofa in a dreamy and abstracted mood, while the ladies disappeared to deposit bonnets and shawls, and the major was detained near the guard-house for an instant. Now this was just what he had fancied for himself, only the picture was more delicately touched, and he began unconsciously to fill up his own rough outlines after the same fashion, only—Miss Lawrence would perseveringly remain seated in the widow's chair, and he had forgotten the stepdaughter altogether.

"Eliza! Eliza!" called the major, his heavy approaching step shaking the piazza. "Mrs. Johnson hasn't come—I forgot to tell you—and won't be here until Monday; and here 's Tom all this while"——

"Pray don't trouble yourself about me," exclaimed the colonel, starting up and striding to the window; for he comprehended by intuition that Mrs. Johnson could be no other than the widow. "I can wait very well, I assure you. I"——

"Why, my dear fellow," said the major, and the aggrieved colonel saw a twinkle in his merry eyes, "you are really very accommodating to put up with *our* society alone for three whole days! Now I think of it, the note says Tuesday instead of Monday; for she has some arrangements to make about Sallie's next term."

"Sallie," indeed! "Johnson and Sallie!" It spoke well for the romance of the future Mrs. Hayward. The colonel somehow hoped Miss Lawrence was not within hearing; and then the major could carry him off, just as he heard the ladies returning, to show him "the fixtures," as he said, and introduce Lieutenant Morris. What did he care for a trumpery lieutenant with a downy chin, who blushed when he heard Miss Agnes had arrived? What business had he to blush at any such intelligence?

But the colonel's star became more propitious. By a tacit consent, Mrs. Johnson and her prospects were not alluded to before Miss Lawrence; and he sat opposite to her at dinner, and near her on the piazza, when the ladies brought out their work to join them, and it was as quiet and domestic a party as one could wish to see. The colonel began to feel as if he had always been there, and in the habit of seeing Eliza and Agnes, as the major called them, every day. He stole a glance now and then; and, by the end of an hour, came to the conclusion that Miss Lawrence was about twenty-four, tall, but not too slender, with just the hair and eyes he preferred, and the most sensible woman he had ever met.

"And so time ambled, withal," through three days, comprising so much of rational enjoyment, that our hero looked back upon it as if years had passed since he had come to the quiet haven. Several times the major had evidently been bent upon disturbing his dream of happiness, by allusions to the lady so soon to arrive; once even he had called him "the oddest fellow he had ever seen, to have so little curiosity about the lady he was going to marry, especially a friend of Eliza's!" but he had invariably managed to change the subject as soon as possible.

Monday evening had come—the last day of grace drawing to a close; and the colonel found that, with their isolated position, the major's engagements, and

Eliza's housekeeping, he had said more to Miss Lawrence than any lady he had ever met before. They had exchanged views on a hundred topics, some of which agreed wonderfully; and others had called forth gay bantering from the lady, and a playful war of words, that made them none the less good friends.

Monday evening—the sunset already fading from the clouds—and the colonel grew desperate. He felt that he had committed himself rashly, and, with characteristic coolness and calculation, sought the major to tell him so.

"It 's no use!" said the unhappy victim of impulse; "I cannot see that horrid Mrs. Johnson! I don't wish to marry! I should make a most hard-hearted step-father. Tell her so; and that she 's had a fortunate escape. I will go in the first boat to-morrow, and apply for a frontier station. I wasn't meant for a Benedick; but, if you think my word of honor is at stake"—and he fairly groaned.

"I must say," answered the major, stoutly, "this is what I never expected from you. Here you write, in the most unprovoked manner, to Eliza and myself to choose you a wife. We exert all our common sense, and choose one you virtually accept. She comes down here to meet you; you show the white feather, and run away from a pair of eyes! I must say that it's ungrateful, and Eliza and I feel *hurt!*"

The major was evidently offended, past present conciliation. The colonel was miserable, and went out of a neighboring sally-port, self-accused as a coward and a simpleton. He met Miss Lawrence coming slowly homewards from a ramble with Willy. He forgot everything but her presence, and gave the well-satisfied juvenile his cane for a horse. Back scampered the delighted equestrian, leaving them alone. Alone, and the moon coming up large and full over the quiet waters, the willows swerving silently to the pointed marsh grasses, and a low murmur as the advancing tide broke almost at their feet.

"You will walk with me—I am sure you will; and it may be the last time."

He could not see her face; but she walked on as he turned from the yawning archway, casting a broad shadow over their path.

An instant before, and the colonel had intended to depart at daybreak without seeing her again; but now the quick tide of impulse was turned, and he told her why he had wished to go. That she had become so dear, so very dear to him—united all he had ever imagined of sister and wife—had brightened his life with such pleasant dreams—marriage with any other seemed like sacrilege, and his whole soul revolted. He spoke with energy, passion, and tenderness combined. He looked into her face once more. It was not turned from him now, and large tears were standing in her eyes. His hand trembled as he covered with it her own lying upon his arm.

"And you love me?" she said, as if she were musing, rather than speaking.

"Love you?"

"And you will not marry the one your friends have chosen for you?"

"*Never!*"

It seemed so cruel and heartless in her to smile at the emphasis which he gave the word. He had not expected it; and he released her hand, grieved and growing colder.

"Not even if *I* should prove to be the lady?"

"Oh, Agnes!"

"It was Miss Lawrence a moment ago. And, now I think of it, Mrs. Johnson has been waiting for her husband's return from Washington."

"Mrs. Johnson! You—you surely have never been married?"

"Nevertheless, I am the lady referred to by the major; and my little Jeannie is to come down with Mrs. Johnson to-morrow. She is a most excellent person, and has not the most remote idea of killing her husband, even for the honor you propose doing her."

"Oh, Agnes, do not trifle with me! Tell me all your history. Why did they conceal your name? Can I ever hope to supply the place"——

"Of who? Jeannie is an orphan niece I have adopted. No one but yourself ever imagined me a widow. And you must blame no one else," she said, with a bright smile, and offering her hand again. "No mystery was intended until we discovered your mistake. And are you quite sure you will not marry the major's choice?"

The tea-table had been waiting an hour and a half; in fact, it was only the drum-beat that startled them into the thought of a return.

Eliza looked up with a questioning smile as they entered, and the major "hemmed!" loudly, as he asked what they had been doing all this time.

"Taking a lesson in coast survey," replied Agnes, for the somewhat abashed colonel; "and I had no idea it was so pleasant a study."

SONNET.—POWER OF TIME.

BY WM. ALEXANDER.

How mighty are thy ruins, Time! Along
  The dark and lengthening vistas of the past
  Look we to learn thy power. What wrecks! what vast,
What spectral forms do unto thee belong!
All nature quakes beneath thy iron rod,
  O Desolation's lord! Thy ruthless sway
  All own. Towers, cities, battlements decay;
And rocks fall headlong where thy feet have trod;
Palmyra, Balbec, Babylon, even they
  With one, the mother of dead empires stand,
  Sad ghost-like spectacle to every land—
O'er them thy car hath passed destroyingly;
E'en flinty pyramids—brass walls descend;
Before thee all but nature's God must bend.